recommendations of the National Development Council, has been reconstituted on 14th September, 2005, with the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj as the Chairperson and the Union Minister of Rural Development added as a member of the Sub-Committee. The Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee include, inter alia, working out the modalities for strengthening the financial domain of the PRIs through transfer of resources from the Centre and state governments; assessing the capacity of the PRIs to raise revenues and other resources and to develop an action plan in this regard; analyzing the capability of PRIs at different levels to absord the financial allocation made to the PRIs under different schemes; and to develop a framework to ensure fiscal discipline and financial accountability at different levels of PRIs.

(b) Yes, sir. The performance across the States in taking appropriate measures for streamlining and empowering implementation has been uneven. The State Governments have to make greater efforts so that the Panchayats fully attain the status of "institutions of self government" as stipulated in Article 243 G of Part-IX of the Constitution of India.

(c) The guidelines of Centrally Sponsored Scheme are being reviewed to ensure the centrality of Panchayats in planning and implementation. As regards new Centrally Sponsored Schemes, wherever relevant, it is proposed to provide for a central role for Panchayats. Thus, for example, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provides for the Panchayats to be the "Principal authorities" for the planning and implementation of scheme under the Act. It is also the endeavor of Ministry of Panchayati Raj to ensure the centrality of Panchayats in the schemes under Bharat Nirman.

Steps for development of Panchayati Raj

2782. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether any major steps have been taken for further development of Panchayati Raj system in the country in the last two years; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes, sir. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj was set up on 27 May 2004. After the Ministry was set up, a Conference of Chief Ministers and

State Ministers in charge of rural development and Panchayati Raj on "Poverty Alleviation and Rural Prosperity through Panchayati Raj" was organized in New Delhi on 29-30 June 2004, jointly by the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Issues relating to effective implementation of Part IX and IX a of the Constitution on Panchayati Raj were tabled as agenda for discussions by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. In this Conference, a decision was taken to hold seven Round Table Conferences to formulate a draft action plan towards achieving the objective of strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions to enable them to emerge as institutions of self-government for the planning and implementation of programmes of economic development and social justice as envisioned in the Constitution.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened seven Round Table Meetings with the State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj between July, 2004 and December, 2004. A set of 150 action points were evolved by consensus and adopted unanimously at the conclusion of the last Round Table in Jaipur in December, 2004.

A Council of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister for Panchayati Raj has been constituted to review the implementation of the recommendations. The first meeting of the Council was held on 5th-6th August 2005 at Kochi, Kerala. A Committee of Chief Secretaries of States and State Panchayati Raj Secretaries was also constituted on 7th January, 2005 under the Chairmanship of the Union Secretary (Panchayati Raj) to monitor the progress on the implementation of the 150 recommendations of the seven Round Tables and the decisions of the Council of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj. Five review meetings of the Committee have so far been held in April 2005, June, 2005, September, 2005, November 2005 and April, 2006. Next meetings of both the Committee of Chief Secretaries and Council of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj are scheduled to be held in June 2006.

With a view to interacting with Panchayats and carrying out a review with the authorities concerned of the progress in implementing the points for action mutually agreed to in the Round Tables, a process of visiting the States and UTs at the level of Union Minister for Panchayati Raj has been initiated. Fourteen States/Union Territories have been covered so far. These include Karnataka, West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Haryana, Chhatisgarh, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Goa, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh,

Punjab, Lakshadweep and Chandigarh. Each visit is concluded with a Statement of Conclusions jointly signed with the Chief Minister of the State concerned, laying out the points of action on which the State would move to operationalise the recommendations of the Round Tables.

An exercise is underway to review different statues with a view to harmonise them with the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution. Similarly, the guidelines of Centrally Sponsored Schemes are being reviewed to ensure the centrality of Panchayats in planning and implementation. As regards new Centrally Sponsored Schemes, it is proposed to provide for a central role for Panchayats wherever relevant. Thus, for example, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provides for the Panchayats to be the "Principal authorities" for the planning and implementation of schemes under the Act. The Central Ministries have also been requested to undertake an exercise in activity mapping to delineate what should be done at the central, state and Panchayat levels. Steps are also being taken to fill in critical gaps in infrastructure and capacity building so that Panchayats can effectively fulfill their constitutional role.

Prosecution of public servants

2783. DR. BIMAL LALJAN:
DR. P. C. ALEXANDER:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases that are awaiting Government's permission for prosecuting public servants in corruption cases;

(b) the cases out of them which are pending for more than one year;

(c) whether Government realize that long delays in sanctioning prosecution would often result in defeating the objectives of fighting corruption among public servants; and

(d) if so, the action proposed to be taken to expedite disposal of pending cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): (a) As on 30-4-2006, 90 cases for according prosecution sanction were pending with various Ministries/Departments of the Central Government and State Governments.